

US 93 Corridor Study

MISSOULA to FLORENCE

2.0 PUBLIC PROCESS AND AGENCY COORDINATION

The US 93 Corridor Study utilized a public involvement process to engage a number of groups with potential interest in the study. Stakeholder interviews were conducted to seek input from City, County, transit, and civic group representatives within the corridor. An Advisory Committee was formed from these representatives to provide feedback and guidance throughout the study process. The public was engaged through public meetings, newsletters, and the project web site. Resource agency coordination also occurred throughout the process to identify potential resource constraints. Members of the Stakeholder group and the Advisory Committee are listed in Appendix A.

2.1 Public Involvement Activities

Public Meetings

The first set of public meetings was held on February 14, 15, and 16, 2006, at the Lolo Community Center, Quality Inn Conference Center in Missoula, and the Florence-Carlton School in Florence, respectively. Approximately 30 citizens attended the meeting in Lolo, 45 citizens attended the meeting in Missoula, and 25 citizens attended the meeting in Florence. Meeting attendees were asked to identify issues and concerns along the US 93 corridor. The main concerns for the meetings' attendees were roadway congestion, insufficient bicycle/pedestrian facilities, and conflicting intersection turning movements.



The second set of public meetings was held on June 12 and 13, 2006, at the Quality Inn in Missoula and the Florence-Carlton School. Meeting attendees were asked to review and comment on a preliminary set of improvement options. There were 46 attendees at the Missoula meeting and 34 attendees at the Florence meeting. Most meeting attendees were opposed to an East Side Bypass roadway between either Florence and Missoula or between Lolo and Missoula out of concern that a new roadway may promote development in previously undisturbed areas. However, there was strong support for either High-Occupant Vehicle (HOV) or High-Occupant Toll (HOT) lanes and a majority support for multi-modal and transit options. There was also very strong support for development of a separated bicycle and pedestrian facility between Lolo and Missoula, as well as improved intersections and turn lanes.

A third set of public meetings was held on August 15 and 16, 2007 at the Lolo School Gymnasium and the Quality Inn Conference Center in Missoula. These meetings were intended to review the revised set of goals and objectives, the revised set of improvement options, and the preliminary policy tools. Twenty-four citizens attended the meeting in Lolo and 45 citizens attended the meeting in Missoula. Meeting attendees were asked to provide input on which improvement options and policy tools they would support. In general, there was broad support

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for transit and multi-modal options, while there was mixed support for options adding lanes or new connecting roadways. There was general support for all categories of policy tools.

A fourth set of public meetings was held on January 30 and 31, 2008 at the Florence-Carlton School Gymnasium / Cafeteria and the Quality Inn Conference Center in Missoula. These meetings were intended to define the traffic problems on US 93, review solutions to the problems

and the screening process, and gauge public support for forwarded improvement options. Twenty-one citizens attended the meeting in Florence and 21 citizens also attended the meeting in Missoula. Meeting attendees were asked to provide input on how they would prioritize forwarded improvement options. In general, there was strong support for transit options and spot improvements. There was also general support for policy tools.



A final set of meetings was held on August 5 and 6, 2008 at the Lolo Community Center and the Quality Inn Conference Center in Missoula. These meetings were intended to present the set of recommended improvements and to discuss potential funding strategies. Fifteen people attended the meeting in Lolo and eight people attended the meeting in Missoula. Oral comments from these two meetings are included in Appendix B.

Newsletters were prepared in advance of each of the public meetings detailing corridor goals, project description and status, planning steps and schedule, and policy tools and improvement options. Newsletters are included in Appendix C. A website was also developed for this project and included general information about the project, contact information for project team members, and an online comment form.

Stakeholder Interviews / Advisory Committee Meetings

Stakeholder interviews were conducted over the period from November 2005 to January 2006 with representatives from Missoula and Ravalli Counties, the City of Missoula, law enforcement agencies, and local transit providers. Representatives were asked to provide local input, assist in issues and alternatives identification, and offer comments on potential improvement options and the final recommendations of the Corridor Study.

A Stakeholder's workshop was held on April 6, 2006. The purpose of this workshop was to gather together a broad-based group of stakeholders to review the issues identified during interviews and the first set of public meetings and to help determine corridor purpose, develop preliminary goals, and confirm priority issues for the corridor. Twenty-three attendees met at the Missoula County Courthouse on April 6, 2006.

Six Advisory Committee meetings were held over the course of the study. The first Advisory Committee meeting was held on February 15, 2006 at the Missoula City/County Health

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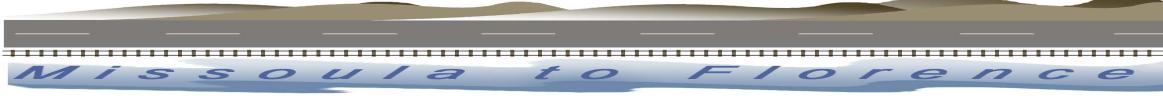
Building. The purpose of this meeting was to introduce the US 93 Corridor Study planning process, and to discuss the study schedule and the role of the advisory committee. Committee members were asked to help refine the list of corridor goals, issues, and concerns while discussing the existing conditions of the area. There were 22 attendees at the first meeting. A second meeting was held on June 13, 2006. The purpose of this meeting was to confirm the corridor purpose, need, and goals as well as to present and discuss possible improvement options. There were 18 attendees at this meeting. A third meeting was held on May 14, 2007. The purpose of this meeting was to introduce the new lead consultant team, review and reconfirm corridor goals, and review and reconfirm possible corridor and intersection improvement options. A fourth meeting was held on June 25, 2007 to confirm changes made to the draft corridor improvement options and to discuss and gather comments on the draft policy recommendations. A fifth meeting was held on January 28, 2008 to clearly define the US 93 traffic problems, review solutions to the problems, outline the screening process, and present forwarded improvement options. A final meeting was held on July 31, 2008 to present the set of recommended improvements and to discuss potential funding strategies.

2.2 Agency Coordination

Resource agencies were invited to attend an agency workshop on April 5, 2006. The purpose of this workshop was to provide an overview of the US 93 Corridor Study planning process and discuss issues and concerns regarding resources along and affected by US 93 between Missoula and Florence. The meeting was attended by seventeen representatives from ten different agencies, including MDT, FHWA, the United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), the Montana Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ), the Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation (DNRC), the United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), the United States Army Corps of Engineers (USACE), and Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks (MFWP). Attendees discussed impacts to wetlands, streams, floodplains, and fisheries, as well as impacts from runoff and sanding salt. Other issues of concern included National Historic Landmarks and other cultural resources within the corridor, impaired streams, air quality issues, animal-vehicle conflicts and animal strikes, and general development and growth issues.

MFWP responded to a request for information regarding the US 93 corridor. This letter, included in Appendix D, provided initial comments on preliminary fish and wildlife issues within the corridor. No other agency comments were received.

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